



DC COMMISSION ON THE ARTS & HUMANITIES

EXECUTIVE COMMISSION MEETING

THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 2009

4:00 – 6:00 PM

GREATER WASHINGTON URBAN LEAGUE BOARDROOM

MINUTES

Commissioners

Anne Ashmore-Hudson, Chair
Rhona Wolfe Freidman, Vice Chair
Marsha Ralls, Treasurer
Michael R. Sonnenreich, At-Large
Judith Terra, Secretary
Lavinia Wohlfarth, Parliamentarian
Rebecca Fishman
Rogelio Maxwell

Staff

Gloria Nauden, Executive Director
Shai Littlejohn, Deputy Director
Catherine Cleary, Legislative and Grants Manager
Rachel Dickerson, Public Art Manager
Moshe Adams, Legislative and Grants Program
Assistant/Recorder
Carell Kent, Executive Assistant

I. Call to Order

Anne Ashmore-Hudson, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:08 PM. The executive director of the Greater Washington Urban League welcomed the commissioners and introduced “Uplift” magazine.

II. Approval of Minutes

The Chair asked the Commission to review the minutes from the full Commission meeting on March 26, 2009.

Following discussion, it was moved by Commissioner Sonnenreich and seconded by Commissioner Friedman that the Commission approve the minutes as presented.

*Motion Carried

*Unanimous

III. Chair’s Report

The Chair mentioned her meeting with the White House social secretary and presented the comprehensive listing of Commission activities that was submitted to the White House and the Mayor’s office. One of the outcomes of the meeting was that the DC Youth Orchestra was

invited to play at the White House Easter Egg Roll. The Chair inquired about the possibility of helping the DCYO to find a new site at which to train the students.

The Chair mentioned the baseball stadium dedication, including the negative review printed in the Washington Post. It was noted that an independent source has written a letter countering the review. She also commented on the concert on the Mall commemorating Marian Anderson and the success of the Welcome to Washington event at the Harmon Center.

IV. Executive Director's Report

The Executive Director presented the new deputy director, Shai Littlejohn, who introduced herself to the commissioners.

The Executive Director then introduced the interstitial videos that the Commission produced for its ArtNewsletter that will be aired on Channel 16 and commented on the partnerships we will develop going forward to continue to distribute the content. The commissioners watched the CAH/grants tutorial video featuring Commissioner Mpulubusi.

The Executive Director presented the topic of PSA airings. Commissioner Friedman inquired about the governance of such airings and the Executive Director explained the legislation. The Chair asked who produces the videos. The Executive Director responded that she and Marquis Perkins, the Director of Marketing, control the process in-house. The Executive Director added that she will be entering an MOU in 2010 with OCTO to overhaul the website. Commissioner Fishman asked about promoting DCCAH on Metro and Metrobus. The Executive Director commented that we have entered into new agreements with Metro to that end.

The Executive Director noted the invitation from DC Economic Partnerships to host a private meeting. Commission staff will arrange the meeting for Commissioners based on the level of interest.

The commissioners discussed problems with AMS, the strategic planning organization, in gathering information from Commissioners. It was noted that Michele Walter does not connect well with the Commissioners and, as a result, Commissioners have been less responsive. Commissioner Sonnenreich expressed his concern and requested to double-check the contract for deliverables. He suggested that the Commission may need to withhold payment from AMS.

The Executive Director presented the Commission with the remaining discretionary fund balance. The commissioners reviewed the level of discretionary funding available and the Executive Director explained the history behind the DC International Film Festival as it related to allocation of budget monies from O-type funding. She stated that she was still waiting for proof that former Deputy Director Lionell Thomas, authorized payment. There is a need for a paper trail. The Chair reinforced the notion that the Commission needs to establish parameters of the discretionary funding process. Commissioner Sonnenreich asked about the O-type funding level. He wanted to know actual expenses and obligations. He wanted to know, at the

beginning of each Commission meeting, how much might go out the door. Commissioner Wohlfarth reminded the commissioners that their decisions are not based solely on how much money is available but also in relation to the Commission's priorities. The Chair asked about the difference between the O-type fund and the Community Outreach fund. The commissioners need to discover how \$200K was taken away from the O-type fund and they need to decide how much to leave in the bank. Commissioner Sonnenreich reiterated that goals, strategies and priorities need to be set and clearly stated for discretionary spending. The Chair suggested conducting a retreat to undertake this process. Commissioner Terra recommended that the commissioners conduct the retreat themselves. Commissioner Wohlfarth asked which projects requesting funding today could be capially funded. The Executive Director stated the public art projects and Summer Youth Employment Program. The commissioners opted to keep all of the O-type funding and the set-aside in the bank.

Council is reviewing the Mayor's 2010 budget proposal now and staff will email the updated budget as soon as it is completed.

The Executive Director suggested opening the opportunities for partners to present as done in the past. The Executive Director mentioned Varissa McMickens and her organization and is scheduled to meet with Ms. McMickens this week.

The Executive Director remarked that since the Commission provides funding to the grantees, the Commission cannot request tickets. Commissioner Fishman mentioned that grantees should give the Commissioners invitations and tickets to their events.

V. Poet Laureate's Report

The Poet Laureate was not in attendance.

VI. Takoma Park Public Art Project

Commissioner Wohlfarth introduced the Takoma Park Public Art Project and recommended that funding come from Capital funds. The Commission previously asked about the railroad and CFX in regards to maintenance and use of the full site. Commissioner Sonnenreich asked if any money was built into the project for maintenance. In addition, he asked about leakage and breakage. Rachel Dickerson, DC Creates Public Art Manager, stated that DC Commission on the Arts Humanities is responsible for maintenance. He asked if there is a reserve put aside for the maintenance of the art. Rachel Dickerson replied that there is a reserve commensurate for all public art projects written into the grant agreements.

It was motioned by Commissioner Sonnenreich and seconded by Commissioner Terra to fund the Takoma Park Metro Station for \$260,000 from Capital funds.

*Motion passed

*Unanimous

VII. Washington Performing Arts Society

Jennifer Motruk Loy and Jack Rasmussen introduced themselves to the Commission. Ms. Loy introduced the organization and explained its history and national reach. The Chair requested a copy of WPA's artist directory. The WPA requested funds for "Fast Forward - 35 years of WPA and the DC Arts Scene" scheduled from November 2010 through December 2010. The exhibition is a retrospective of cultural history and art. The WPA requested \$40,000 in funding for their exhibition.

VIII. Capital Region Touring Program

Lisa Richards Toney, program coordinator, introduced panel representative, David Oliver Lipscomb, local theatre producer and actor. The Chair thanked Mr. Lipscomb for attending the meeting. Under the direction and guidance of the Commissioner/Convener Christopher Cowan, the panel met on March 31 2009 for the deadline on March 6, 2009. A total of 5 applications were submitted. The total amount of funds requested was \$20,450.00. Of the 5 applications, 3 were recommended for funding based on their merit totaling \$9,450.00. This recommendation left a remaining unallocated program budget of \$11,000.00.

The Capital Region Touring Program, in collaboration with the Maryland State Arts Council, provides funding to District of Columbia presenters to book performing artists included on the Artist Touring Roster of the Maryland State Arts Council. The program goals include expanding the pool of performing artists presented in the District of Columbia, furthering the artistic development of these performing artists by enhancing their marketability beyond their home states and promoting the unique cultural traditions of both Washington, DC and the State of Maryland.

Mr. Lipscomb commented on the quality of the applications, noting that the two applications that were not recommended for funding did not seem complete. He highlighted the poor representation by Ford's Theatre. He stated that the Theatre Alliance's application was incomplete. The panel found that Arch Development's application package was very well put-together. He also noted that Dakshina/Daniel Phoenix Singh had a great project but the panel withheld some funding because of the lack of clarity covering the travel expenses.

Following discussion, it was moved by Commissioner Friedman and seconded by Commissioner Sonnenreich that the recommendations be accepted.

*Motion Carried

*Unanimous

IX. Folk and Traditional Arts

Program coordinator, Ebony Blanks, and panel representative, Diallo Sumbry from Farafina Kan Drum and Dance Company, introduced the Folk and Traditional Arts panel recommendations. Under the direction and guidance of the Commissioner/Convener Lou Hill Davidson, the panel met on April 23, 2009 for the Deadline of December 10, 2008. A total of 14 applications were submitted. The total amount of funds requested was \$14,000.00. Of the 14 reviewed, the panel recommended funding for 9 applicants totaling \$9,000.00 based on their merit. This recommendation left a remaining unallocated program budget of \$5,000.00.

The Folk and Traditional Arts Program supports projects that are developed in close consultation and collaboration with the communities whose traditions are to be presented. Individuals and organizations are encouraged to use folklorists, ethnomusicologists or other specialists for documentation, program development, interpretation, and program production. Projects supported by the Folk Arts Program are strengthened when they include interpretive components designed to aid audiences in appreciating a tradition's meaning, artistic significance, and its social, cultural and historical contexts.

The panel recommended that the Commission invest in an online workshop format.

Commissioner Wohlfarth asked about webinars, and Mr. Sumbry illustrated a couple of possibilities for the format.

Following discussion, it was moved by Commissioner Sonnenreich and seconded by Commissioner Terra to accept the panel's recommendation.

*Motion Carried

*Unanimous

X. Department of Youth and Rehabilitation Services

The DC Creates Public Art manager, Rachel Dickerson, introduced Sherry Dean, special assistant to Vincent Schiraldi, the Executive Director of the Department of Youth and Rehabilitation Services. Also in attendance was mural artist, Joey Tomassoni. Cheryl Foster is scheduled to do the glass work. Ms. Dean described the major transformation that her agency has undergone since 2005. A new building was erected on the grounds of Oak Hill and the new site is far less institutional and more habitable. The new facility will house 60 young men and the move-in process has already begun. The first group of young men will move in on May 8, 2009. There will be ten youth in each housing unit. Also, included in the new facility are a theater, classrooms and outdoor recreational areas. She reminded the commissioners that the facility was still a locked facility. The facility's focus is on the strengths of the youth and their families while specifically emphasizing that the students have a lot to offer. Ms. Dean pointed that four of the students in the facility served on the panel to select the artwork.

Joey Tomassoni explained the artwork he created for the mural and how it works with the mission of the facility. Commissioner Fishman asked about the methods of preventing graffiti or defacing to the mural. Mr. Tomassoni explained the actions were being taken, including a clear coating being placed over the artwork. Ms. Dean added that this is still a very controlled environment.

Ms. Foster described the glass tiles that will be installed on the solid glass wall directly across from the mural. Commissioner Friedman asked if the tiles would be on the entire wall. Ms. Foster replied, no. The wall is massive and the 60 scholars would be invited to contribute to the decision on how exactly the tiles would be installed, but they would likely be at eye level. Each student will be invited to keep a foam-core copy of the tile they create. Commissioner Fishman

asked if new tiles would be added for new residents and Ms. Foster noted that the current project is to serve the students who will be moving in to the facility next month. There is the potential that additional tiles could be added in the future.

Following discussion, it was moved by Commissioner Wohlfarth and seconded by Commissioner Friedman to approve the artwork.

*Motion Carried

*Unanimous

XI. Summer Youth Employment Program

The DC Creates Public Art Program Assistant, Deirdre Ehlen and Community Outreach Coordinator, Shyree Mezick, explained the program. They stated that their program's goal was to accommodate 100 youth. It was decided to partner with resident nonprofits to host the student workers. The young people involved with the program will also create a large-scale community mural. The request was for \$100,000 from the capital budget to produce the mural at the Rhode Island Metro station. Seven arts organizations, which have all participated in the Murals DC project, have committed to participating. The goal is to accommodate as many youth as possible; they are still open to suggestions for any arts organizations that serve youth and want to participate.

Commissioner Wohlfarth asked who or what agency made the request and the Executive Director explained that the request originated from the Executive Office of the Mayor.

Commissioner Friedman asked about the deadline. Ms. Mezick commented that the youth can enroll at any time but if they only want to work at the Commission, they have to enroll by May 1.

Conclusion:

It was moved by Commissioner Wohlfarth and seconded by Commissioner Friedman to approve the funding request.

*Motion Carried

*Unanimous

The Chair asked who the lead artist is. Ms. Ehlen answered that Albus Cavus would be the artistic lead.

XII. Hope House DC

Carol Fennelly, the Executive Director of Hope House, described the organization and project. She then distributed information about the organization. Hope House began in DC in response to relocation of prisoners following the closing of Lorton Prison, which houses DC prisoners. The goal was to keep the families in communication with each other while a member of the family was incarcerated. She requested funding to support the summer camp program where 15-17 young people would visit with their fathers in prison in Maryland and North Carolina.

The children and the fathers would work on an arts project together. In some cases, this would be the first experience that parent and child had together.

Ms. Fennelly noted the commissioning of the Black Women's Playwrights Group to produce a play that was presented to the Congressional Black Caucus. The artists who work at the camp and with the participants are qualified with a Masters degree at the minimum. They will present an exhibit in the fall that showcases the work produced over the summer.

The cost for two camps is \$34,000 per summer. Commissioner Friedman asked how the participants were selected. Ms. Fennelly replied that participants must complete a parenting course and have good conduct in the prison for at least one year. The two prisons are in North Carolina (100% DC inmates) and Cumberland, Maryland (50% DC inmates). DCCAH funds would cover expenses for the art teachers and the art supplies. Commissioner Friedman asked where the family and visiting participants stay. Ms. Fennelly responded that they stay in North Carolina at an Elks' Lodge for 4 days. In Maryland, they rent a church camp. Art teachers continue the art instruction back at the campsite. It was noted that Cumberland is a federal prison, which does not usually get a lot of outside programming. The organization tries to serve as many of the prisoners who were relocated as possible.

The Executive Director asked how many incarcerated DC men there were. Ms. Fennelly responded that there were 8,500 DC residents total (93% male). Her organization serves approximately 33% of these inmates at 14 different facilities.

Hope House requested \$10,000. The Chair asked when the camp started. Ms. Fennelly replied that one is in July and the other in August. She suggested that they conduct a gallery walk on the last day at Cumberland. It was mentioned that the program serves children from 9 to 14 years old.

Following discussion, it was moved by Commissioner Friedman and seconded by Commissioner Terra that the applicant receive \$10K from leftover grant funds.

*Motion Carried

*Unanimous

XIII. Cultural Development Corporation

Anne Corbett, the Executive Director, described the organization's history and current projects. A need arose from a public planning process started at the end of the Barry Administration. As the then MCI Center was getting ready to open and artists were being hustled out of Downtown, a group formed to make a plan for accommodating those artists. The purpose was to make space for art throughout the District, not just downtown. The Cultural Development Corporation got involved with brokering facilities, planning, writing business plans, developing space and providing artist housing. They just signed a contract with a developer who has units that will be finished in February 2010 at 3rd and K Street.

She explained that CuDC has a spotty funding history, presumably because of the competition with their constituents. She further explained that the organization had a discretionary grant for Flashpoint, their incubator organization, who pays 25% of the cost that it actually totals to house their artists. Ms. Corbett mentioned the merit of the programs offered at Flashpoint. She noted their record of accomplishment for getting critical attention for the artists along with their strong relationship with the *Post*. Commissioner Friedman asked about their funding history with the Commission. The Chair asked if CuDC appealed the decisions. Ms. Corbett considered the appeal to be a method of last resort.

Discussion:

The Chair noted that CuDC went through the competitive process and did not appeal, but rather went around the panel's decision. The Commission agreed that these type of requests and presentations did not belong at these meetings in order to maintain the integrity of the panel process. They requested that DCCAH staff put together a process for this before the May meeting.

It was agreed that the response would be a letter upholding the panelists' decision. The Commission's initial impression was that CuDC was requesting funding for a new project. This was not the case. The CuDC was asking for funding for the same activities for which they had previously applied through the competitive process.

It was moved Commissioner Wohlfarth and seconded by Commissioner Terra to request additional information including a budget that reflects 2009 expenses.

XIV. Adjournment

It was moved by Commissioner Wohlfarth and seconded by Commissioner Terra that the meeting adjourned.

*Motion Carried

*Unanimous

The meeting was adjourned at 6:56 PM.